



# Transitivity Process Analysis of Chomsky's Political Articles

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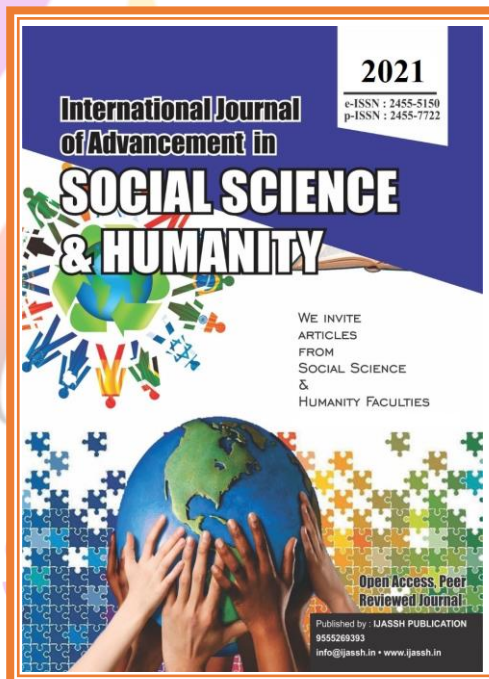
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## ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to reveal how language is used by Chomsky in his political articles from the transitivity perspective, primarily, the process. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) propose six different transitivity processes which are material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral and existential. Two articles are selected in this study. Unlike other prior studies done on transitivity, this study is different due to its unique data set which is Chomsky's Articles. By focusing on the process according to the different types of processes in the experiential metafunction, this study reveals how Chomsky focuses on material process in his political writing in order to communicate his experiences of the world.

**Keywords:** Systematic functional grammar. Transitivity analysis, and Chomsky's political articles



## INTRODUCTION

Systematic functional grammar, transitivity analysis, and Chomsky's political view. In addition, modal for the analysis will be discussed and adopted to reach to the required conclusions and results. After the analysis, there will be some results.

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

In this section, a brief overview of the theories and approaches that are related in one way or another with the present study is introduced in this section.

### Systematic Functional Grammar

SFG deals with the language as a set of possible meanings, and these meanings can be understood through the grammatical choice of the speaker/writer. Halliday explains that the goal of SFG is to answer the question of "what are the basic functions of language, in relation to our ecological and social environment?" (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: 30). Language has three types of meaning which are referred to in systemic accounts of grammar as metafunctions. These three metafunctions are:

1. Ideational function: deals with how the producer of the text reflects their experience of real-world phenomena in language (Halliday 1973: 106). It works to represent cases and events in the world,

and the entities, procedures, and processes involved, which realized by the process of transitivity,

2. Interpersonal function: In this function, the expression of the relationship between the producer and the consumer of the text can be established (Halliday and Matthiessen, 1999: 7). It is realized by mood and modality, and

3. Textual function: deals with the creation of text and the way people organize their meanings into meaningful text. (Halliday and Matthiessen, 1999: 7-8). This role actualizes ideational and interpersonal meanings (Halliday, 2007: 184). Textual function is fulfilled in the structure and cohesion of the content. The researcher is going to explain (transitivity) only, because it is closely related to the analysis of the texts under study.

### Chomsky's political view

Chomsky's political activity ran parallel with his activity as a linguist, where he revolutionized the study of language and mind and rehabilitated the study of mental structure with a profound effect not only on linguistics but also on psychology and philosophy (McGilvray, 2014: 57).

Chomsky identifies himself as a leading international and domestic critic of US

politics. He is the author of over 100 books on subjects like linguistics, war, politics and the media, most of his political books criticize US policy such as : Human Rights and American Foreign Policy (1978), Pirates and Emperors: International Terrorism and the Real World (1986), Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media (1988), Terrorizing the Neighborhood: American Foreign Policy in the post-Cold War Era (1991), Democracy in a Neoliberal Order: Doctrines and Reality (1997), Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda (1997).

### Data Collection

Two political articles written by Chomsky are selected for analysis. These articles are taken from Chomsky's formal website (Chomsky.info), they are as follows: *Its Imperialism, Stupid* (2005), *Its Oil, stupid* (2008).

### The Model

Halliday and Mathissen's modal have been chosen for the analysis of process of both articles that have been mentioned previously

#### A. Transitivity

The transitivity system in SFG is a type of analysis derived from Halliday's work(1985,1994) then is developed by Halliday's and Mathissen's works

(2004,2014). It is considered as a significant analytical model in stylistic and critical discourse analysis as it "construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types. Each process type provides its own model or schema for construing a particular domain of experience as a figure of a particular kind." (Halliday and Matthiessen,2004:170). Each writer represents these processes and participants of a specific event in different ways according to his/her point of view. So, transitivity analysis reveals the writer's perspective.

The Processes that illustrate how the phenomena of our experience of the world are interpreted as linguistic structure are categorized as material, mental, relational, behavioral, verbal, and existential.

1. Material Process: it is the process of doing, which interprets a quantity of change in the flow of events as occurring through some energy input, (ibid:224). There are two participants within these processes, namely actor and goal. The actor is an inherent participant in both transitive and intransitive material clauses, while the goal is inherent only in intransitive clauses, (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014:236). Another type of participants involves in this process, such as the scope which is not affected by the process

performance. It typically occurs in 'intransitive clause'. Also, there is a recipient which benefits from the process where the good are given to, and a client which is the one that services are done for, and attributive (ibid:236,241).

Examples:

(i) *He (Actor) kicked (material)the ball(goal)*

(ii) *She (Actor) sent(material) John(recipient) her best wishes(goal)*

(iii) *Fred (Actor) bought (material) his wife(client) a present(goal)*

(iv) *The mountain climber (Actor) climbed (mental) Alps mountain*

2. Mental Process: explains the amount of change in the inflow of events occurring in our consciousness (ibid: 245). It can be interpreted either as following from a person's consciousness or as affecting it. There are two participants within these processes, namely Senser, which is always human and phenomenon, which includes things whether it is a person, creature, institution, object, substance-e, or abstraction). According to Halliday and Matthiessen, Senser is "the one that 'senses' – feels, thinks, wants or perceives, for example, *Mary in Mary liked the gift,*" ibid: 249), and the phenomena "is that which is felt,

thought, wanted or perceived" (ibid: 251). Furthermore, they distinguish the type of sensing into four categories; they are perceptive (by use of five senses such as see, hear, smell, etc), cognitive (set of clauses as the content of thinking, such as remember, understand, realize, etc), desiderative (expressing desire, such as want, desire, hope, decide, determine, etc), and emotive type of sensing, such as (like, dislike, love, enjoy, etc), (ibid:256).

Examples:

(v) *She feels (mental) his deep pain*

(vi) *She thinks(mental) that Emma will help her in shopping*

3. Relational Process: it is the process of being, where a relationship is created between two terms. There are two categories or modes of relational processes: attributive and identifying. Attributive, which is used to describe, has two participants, namely carrier and attribute, while identifying which is used to define has token/identifier and value/identified as participants. For each type, attributive and identifying, there are three relations: intensive, possessive, and circumstantial, (ibid:263-267). Example:
  - (vii) *Sally is(relational) beautiful.*

(viii) *Diana was (relational) the price of England.*

(ix) *The night has (relational) a magic sky.*

4. Behavioral Process: "Behavioural Processes are processes of typically human physiological and psychological behavior, like breathing, coughing, smiling, dreaming, and staring", (ibid:301). It has a participant that is known as Behavior. Behavior represents the entity that behaves. Example:

(x) *The king frowns (behavioural)*

5. Verbal Process: it is the process of saying that helps in the creation of narration by providing the ability to create dialogue sections and cover any type of symbolic exchange of meaning (ibid:302-303). It consists of three participants: sayer who represents the producer of what said,

receiver which represents the person who is being targeted by the process, verbiage which represents what is said, and target, which refers to the entity by which the utterance is said or sent. For example :

(xi) *Jane asked (verbal) her sister to clean the rug*

6. Existential Process: the process of being which is concerned with the representation of the phenomenon of existence. it consists of only one participant, namely existent, which represents the thing that exists (ibid:309).

For example:

(xii) *There is (existential) a shooting star phenomenon tonight.*

### The Analysis

The analysis of both articles is as follows:

#### Process of the first Article : Its Imperialism

Table (1): Transitivity Analysis of Article 1

No.	The process	Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Material	29	51.78%
2.	Mental	3	5.35 %
3.	Verbal	12	21.42%

4.	Relational	12	21.42%
Total		41	100%

Concerning the process that is used in this article, as it is clear in the tables above that the highest proportion is for the material process which forms (44.23%), where the writer focused on the action and event such as (*undertaken, waging, increased, characterized, developing, given, concocted, published, deepened, made, fixed, quotes, begun, provoke, bombing, protested, fall, maintain*) to describe what happened, what the events that is introduced and what the effect of these events and actions.

Example about material process:

1. Scarcely missing a beat, the government and media doctrinal system concocted new pretexts and justifications for going to war.

The second frequent processes are verbal and relational processes with (7.69%) percentage. Verbs that used to refer to verbal process are (*proclaimed, concluded, elaborated, wrote, reported, warned, pointed out, asserted, revealed*)

The following sentence illustrate this kind of process:

2. In his June 28 speech, President Bush asserted that the invasion of Iraq was undertaken as part of “a

global war against terror” that the United States is waging.

While the Verbs that used to refer to relational process are (*included, was, are, is*).

The following sentence illustrates this kind of process

3. The “spikes of activity” apparently included a coalition air campaign meant to provoke Iraq into some act that could be portrayed as what the memo calls a “casus belli.”

The last process is the mental process which represents (5.35%). Verbs that used to refer to this process are (*think, describe, portrayed, predicted*).

The following sentence illustrates this kind of process:

4. “Americans do not like to think of themselves as aggressors, but raw aggression is what took place in Iraq,” national security and intelligence analyst John Prados concluded after his careful, extensive review of the documentary record in his 2004 book “Hoodwinked.

**Process of second Article: Its Oil, stupid.***Table (2): Transitivity Analysis (Process) of Article 2*

No.	The process	Frequency	Percentage%
1.	Material	29	38.15%
2.	Mental	9	11.84%
3.	Verbal	7	9.21%
4.	Relational	31	40.78%
Total		76	100%

Concerning the process that is used in this article. It is clear in the table above that the highest percentage is for the relational process which represents (40.78%). Chomsky is interested in clarifying the relationship between two entities for the reader/listener to be aware of the relations between these entities. As in the sentence

1.Nir Rosen, one of the most astute and knowledgeable correspondents in the region, observes that the main target of the US-Maliki military operations, Moktada Al Sadr, is disliked by Iran as well: He's independent and has popular support, therefore dangerous.

The second process is the material process which forms (38.15%), the writer focused on the action and event such as (addressed, renew, written, prevailed, gone, secure,

taken, emerge, extract, sign, open, invaded, control, issued, condemned, withdrawn, heightens, comes, support, institute, sustain, achieve, etc.) to describe what happened, what the events that introduce and what the effect of these events and actions. Halliday & Martin (1993) explain that when the clauses are acted by an animate actor, they are defined as processes of action in contrast when the clauses are represented by an inanimate actor; they are defined as event process.

The following sentences illustrate the material process:

2.The no-bid contracts, apparently written by the oil corporations with the help of U.S. officials, prevailed over offers from more than 40 other companies, including



companies in China, India, and Russia.

3. Last November, the guiding concerns were made explicit when President Bush and Iraq's Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki signed a "Declaration of Principles," ignoring the U.S. Congress and Iraqi parliament, and the populations of the two countries.

The third process is the mental process with (11.84%) percentage. It usually involves human consciousness and is therefore often viewed as somewhat subjective. Processes as (appear, reject, see, favour, oppose, observe, reflect).

The following sentence illustrates this process:

4. The policy also is reported to include terrorism within Iran — again legitimate, for the world rulers. A majority of the American people favours diplomacy and oppose the use of force. But public opinion is largely irrelevant to policy formation, not just in this case.

The last frequent process is verbal process with (9.21%) percentage. Saragih (2010:8) states that verbal processes show activities related to information. Verbs that used to refer to this process are (conclude, speak, say, write) The following sentence illustrates this kind of process

5. "There is no proxy war in Iraq," Rosen concludes, "because the U.S. and Iran share (A) the same proxy."

## CONCLUSION

From the analyzed data, four types of transitivity processes are found in the two articles. The material processes are dominating the total number of occurrences in the selected articles. These action processes are related with the US's activities in Iraq and around the world before and after the Iraq war (2003). If one wishes to exert power, it is more influential to exert it within the domain of 'doing' rather than 'sensing', 'saying', or 'behaving' because it is not easy to influence how people think, compared with using physical force to influence how they act.

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